



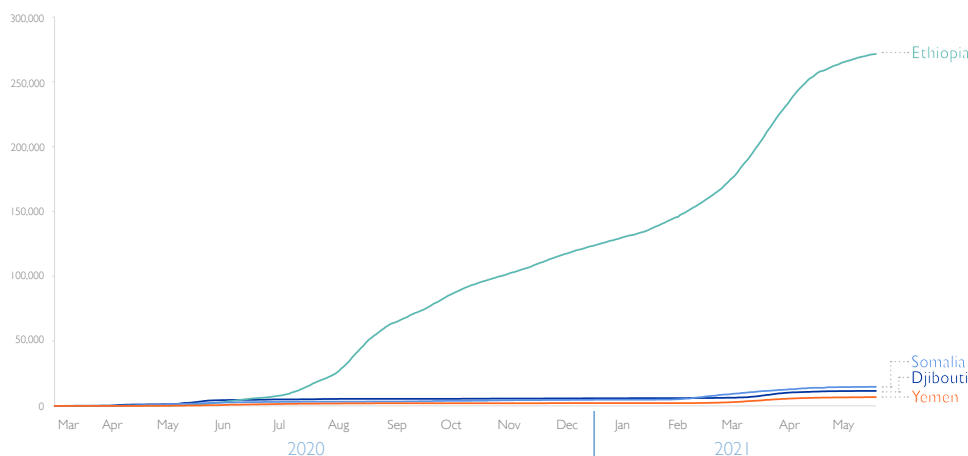
A health worker stands at the entrance of the IOM-supported mother and child health clinic (MCH) in Garowe, Somalia with a thermometer to check incoming patients for COVID-19 symptoms. © IOM 2020/Tobin Jones

## BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 outbreak has restricted global mobility, whilst heightening the risk of exploitation of vulnerable populations. This report provides a snapshot of the **COVID-19 epidemiological situation** and **mobility restrictions**, and of the **current migration trends** along the Eastern Corridor migration route, in addition to an analysis of the impact that movement restrictions have had in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. Moreover, it provides **information on the main protection concerns for migrants** and **assistance provided**, and **COVID-19 risk mitigation measures**. This report utilizes data collected through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs), Migrant Response Centres (MRCs),<sup>1</sup> Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) data, as well as anecdotal information provided by IOM team members working in the region.

## EPIDEMIOLOGICAL UPDATE AND RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK

Incidence Trend of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases as of 31 May 2021



	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Somalia	Yemen
Confirmed cases	11,533	271,541	14,662	6,742
Deaths	154	4,165	769	1,321
Recoveries	11,369	238,734	6,764	-
Active cases	10	28,642	7,129	-

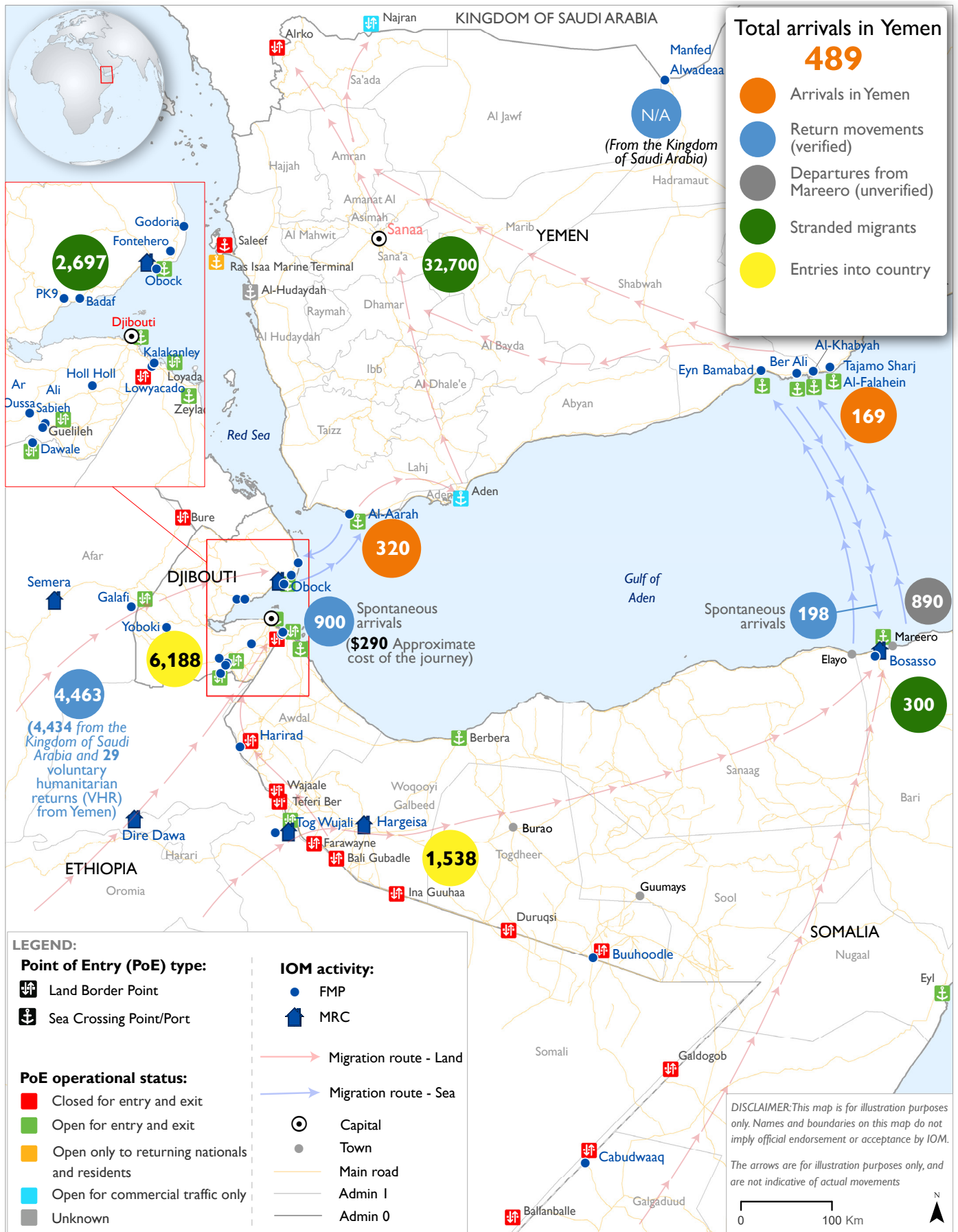
Source: IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) and Migrant Response Centres (MRCs).

<sup>1</sup> Migration Response Centres (MRCs) are situated along key migration routes, where they fill critical gaps by providing direct assistance, including food and temporary shelter, information and service referrals to migrants on the move. MRCs bring together key partners to facilitate the identification of migrants in vulnerable situations, and ensure that they receive appropriate, immediate and longer-term support. Eight MRCs are currently operational in the Horn of Africa: Obock (Djibouti), Hargeisa, Bossaso (Somalia), Semera, Metema, Dire Dawa, Togochale and Moyale (Ethiopia).

## CONTACT

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## COVID-19 Epidemiological Situation

As of 31 May 2021, the number of COVID-19 cases along the Eastern Corridor stood at 304,478. Ethiopia continued recording the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases (89% of total cases). The country distributed over 1.8 million vaccine doses out of the 2.2 million doses obtained through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) initiative by the end of May. Following Ethiopia are Somalia (5% of total cases) and Djibouti (4% of total cases), while Yemen cases represented 2% of the total cases. As of 31 May 2021, the number of COVID-19 related deaths along the Eastern Corridor stood at 6,409, the majority of which were recorded in Ethiopia (65% of total deaths). Yemen holds the highest case fatality rate (CFR) at approximately 19.6%, compared to Djibouti (CFR 1.3%), Ethiopia (CFR 1.5%) and Somalia (CFR 5.2%). This is much higher than the global average CFR of 2.1% and is largely attributable to the challenges of accessing a health care system which has been decimated by years of war. The extent of the impact of COVID-19 in Yemen is largely unknown given limited testing capacities, reduced health seeking behavior, and growing public skepticism around COVID-19. A total of 10,000 vaccine doses arrived at Sanaa airport on 31 May 2021. The World Health Organization (WHO) will begin vaccination campaigns in northern Yemen, where de facto authorities have not reported any infection or fatality figures since May 2020.

## COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions

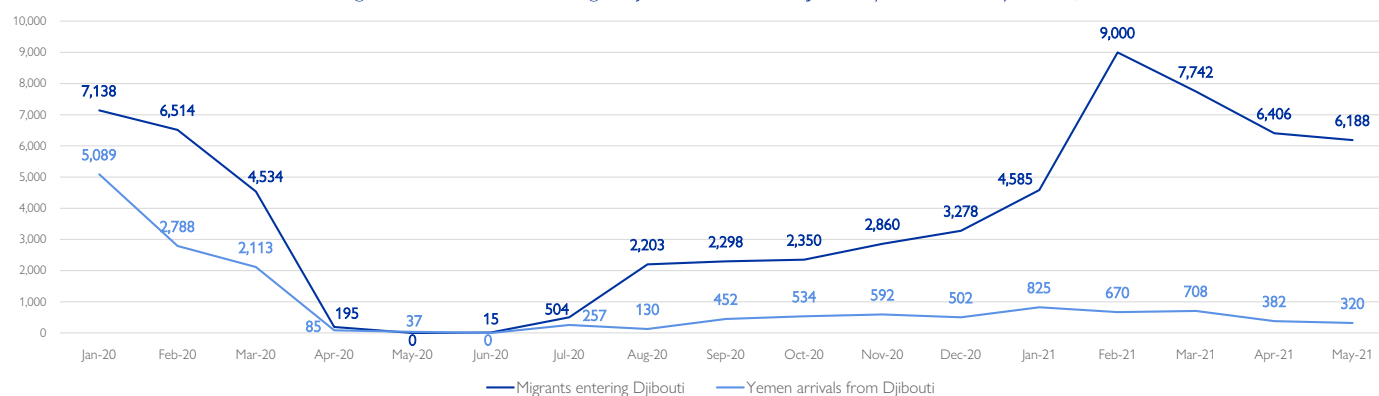
Between the reopening of the country's air, land and sea borders on 17 July 2020 and the end of May 2021, the Djiboutian health authorities recorded a 4.33% COVID-19 positivity rate and a 99.78% recovery rate among all incoming passengers screened at the various Points of Entry (PoEs). The current COVID-19-related restrictions imposed in Ethiopia have been maintained throughout May 2021 given the continued surge in positive cases across the country. Meanwhile, all flights between Somalia and Kenya were suspended from 11 May until at least early August, with exceptions for all United Nations (UN) and medical flights. Due to electoral processes in May, tighter movement restrictions were also imposed at the borders with Djibouti and Ethiopia. In Yemen, there are currently no COVID-19-related mobility restrictions in the southern governorates. Yemenis returning from Saudi Arabia and Oman continue to use Al Wadeeah and Shahin land border points, respectively, provided that they hold a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

## DJIBOUTI SITUATION

### Migrant Flows Observed Through Djibouti and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrants' movements into the country reduced for the third consecutive month, with 6,188 entries observed in May 2021 from Djibouti's western borders, which is 3% lower than the entries observed in April, though continue to be higher than what was observed during the earlier months of the pandemic, and no entries were tracked in Djibouti during May 2020. The entries include around 27% adult females, nearly 67% adult males, and 6% children (which is a decrease from 8% in April). Similar to April, but contrary to previous months, when almost no Somali nationals entered Djibouti, 12 Somali nationals were also tracked upon entry to Djibouti.
- 320 migrant arrivals from Djibouti were tracked in Yemen near Al-Aarah FMP in Lahj governorate, all of whom were Ethiopian nationals. A majority of the migrants tracked were men (83%), 5% were boys, 12% were women, and no girls were tracked.

Migrant Movements through Djibouti to Yemen (January 2020 - May 2021)



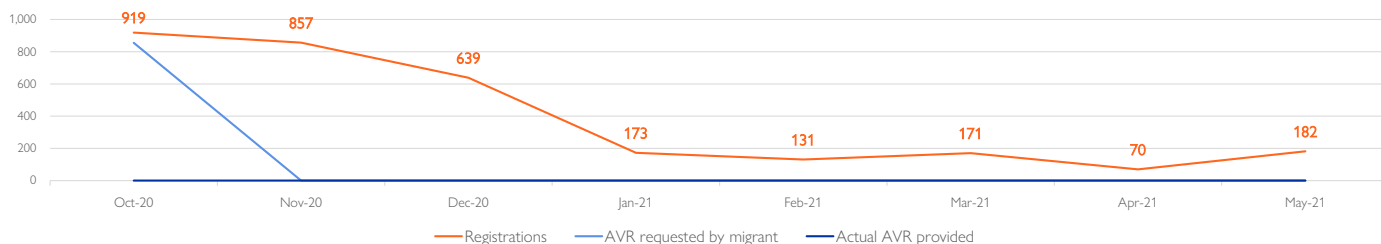


- Spontaneous return movements from Yemen to Djibouti continued in May 2021 with a total of 900 Ethiopian migrants, which is a decrease from the 1,479 returns reported in April. A vast majority of the returns were men (95%), returning from Yemen to the coast of Obock; this represents a 39% decrease compared to April 2021. Since May 2020, IOM tracked a total of 13,601 spontaneous returns of Ethiopian migrants.

### Migrant Protection and Assistance

- As of 20 May 2021, 2,697 migrants on their way to the Arabian Peninsula were stranded in Djibouti and had gathered in 10 spontaneous sites located along the migration route; most migrants were stranded in the Dikhil region and this was the largest number of stranded migrants recorded since the beginning of the year. Immediate needs included water, food, hygiene kits and non-food items (NFIs).
- 182 new migrants were registered at the Obock MRC in May 2021, which is an almost three-fold increase from April.
- During this month, a group of 140 migrants were returned to Ethiopia as part of IOM’s AVR programme.

Registrations at the MRC in Obock and AVR Services Requested and Provided (October 2020 - May 2021)

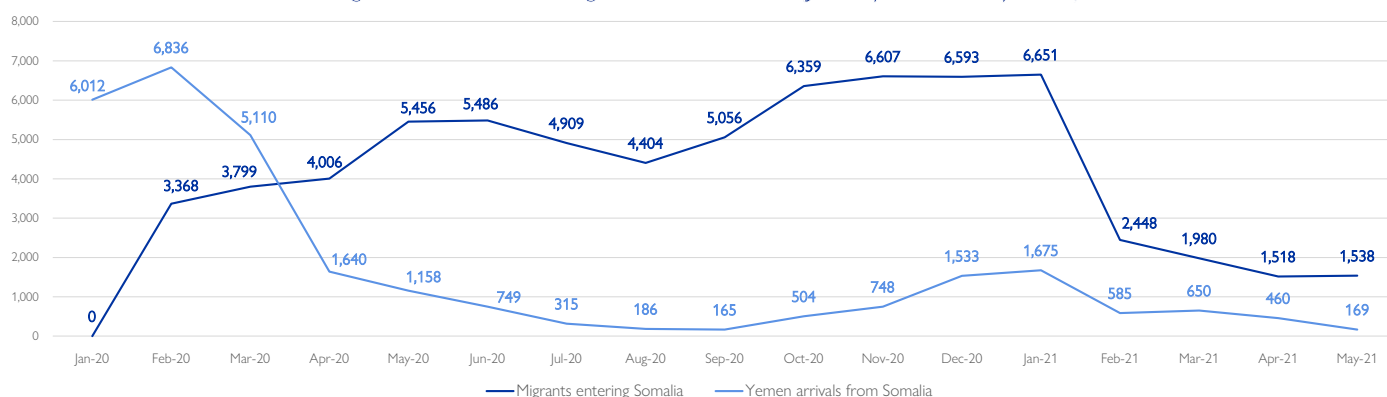


## SOMALIA SITUATION

### Migrant Flows Observed Through Somalia and at Yemen Points of Entry

- Migrant arrivals to Yemen from Somalia stood at 169 in May 2021; a 63% decrease from the 460 arrivals recorded in April 2021. In keeping with historical trends, the majority of the migrants tracked upon arrival in Yemen from Somalia were Ethiopian migrants (65%) with the remaining being Somali nationals (35%). Most arrivals were adult males (65%), while 33% were adult females (up from 18% in April), and 2% were children (down from 18% in April). Unlike reports from previous months, no unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) were tracked in May.
- Unverified reports received by IOM stated that there was a 56% decrease in migrants’ departures from Mareero, a small town 15 km east of Bossaso, compared to April, with only 890 migrants boarding boats to Yemen. Following an Al-Shabaab attack against the Bossaso prison in March 2021, the Puntland police has established security bases near Mareero.
- Migrant entries into Somalia remained stable with only around 1% increase between April (1,518) and May (1,538). Over 94% were Ethiopian nationals, while 3% (50) Yemeni nationals were also tracked, intending to return to Yemen from Somalia. In addition, 37 Tanzanians (2%) were tracked in Somalia, which is a departure from trends in the past.
- Similar to what observed in Djibouti, spontaneous movements from Yemen to Somalia are occurring, and 181 movements were tracked upon arrival in Bossaso in May, consisting of 49% males and 51% females. 174 were returning Somalis, and 7 were Yemeni nationals. Moreover, 17 spontaneous arrivals were recorded in Berbera (13 males and 4 females), including 2 returning Somalis and 15 Yemeni nationals.

Migrant Movements through Somalia to Yemen (January 2020 - May 2021)

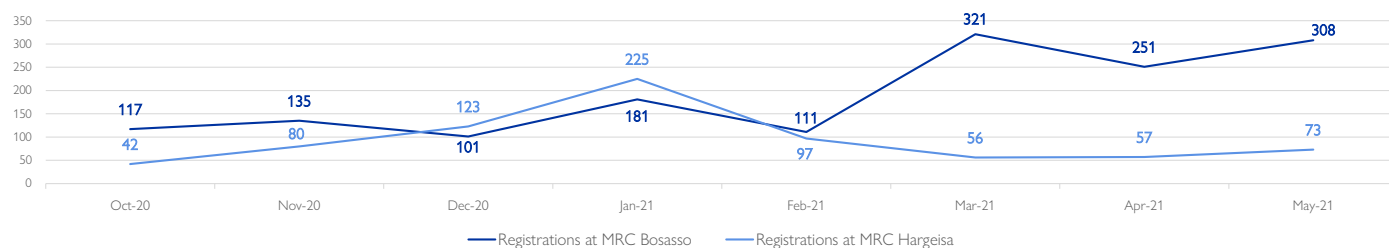


Note: Figures for migrant arrivals from Somalia for January 2020 over 100 days prior to the temporary closure of Gulf Monitoring Points in Somalia. Small changes were made to reported arrivals for February 2020 due to data errors.

## Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that around 300 migrants continue to be stranded in and around Bossaso, with few options available to continue their journey or return home.
- On 23 May, a total of 142 Ethiopian migrants walking along the side of the tarmac road were found and detained at the Bossaso-Gardo checkpoint. These migrants were then taken to the Bossaso central police station for a security screening after which they were all released.
- On 24 May, a female Ethiopian migrant was found dead in her room in Waaciye town of Puntland's Karkaar region, where she was working for a local family who had gone on vacation. The Ethiopian Community Centre (ECC) sent a team to Waaciye town and brought her corpse back to Bossaso for an autopsy which showed no sign of criminal injuries. The deceased was buried in Bossaso.
- A total of 381 migrants were registered at the Bossaso (308) and Hargeisa (73) MRCs; a 24% increase from April. Unlike traditional trends, reduced migrant movements continued throughout May 2021 due to increased security and military presence near Bossaso and Mareero. In addition, the Somaliland Immigration Department has continued to deport Ethiopian migrants who do not have travel documentation, and this has been another deterrent.
- On 2 May, a group of 12 vulnerable male migrants, all Ethiopian nationals, approached the MRC in Bossaso for AVR assistance. These migrants had been forcibly returned to Bossaso by the Omani Government after being in detention for varying periods of time. Additionally, eight men, five women and five children were also forcibly returned to Somalia from Saudi Arabia through Mogadishu airport.
- A total of 83 AVR requests were received at the MRCs in Bossaso (52) and Hargeisa (31). Yet, no AVR movements took place during this month.

Registrations at the MRCs in Bossaso and Hargeisa (October 2020 - May 2021)

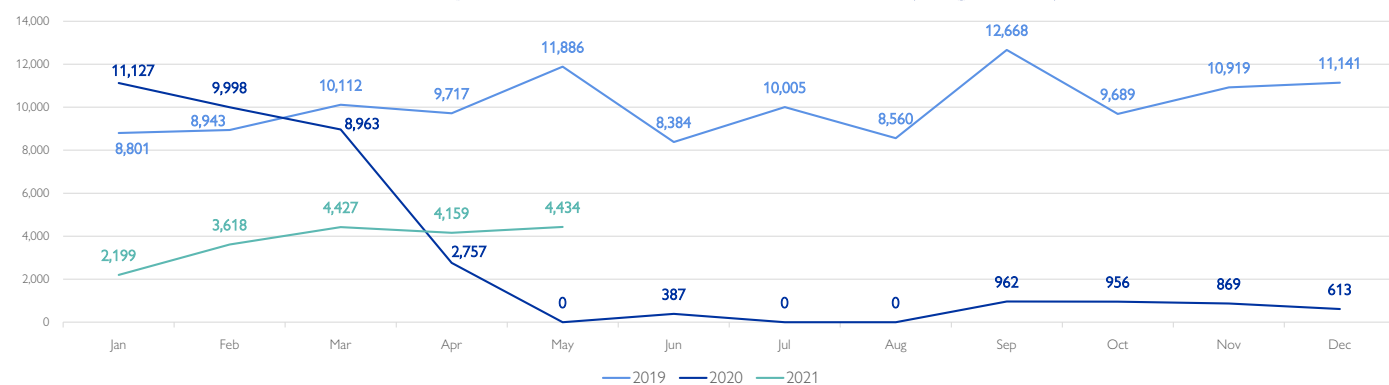


## ETHIOPIA SITUATION

### Migrant Flows, and Protection and Detention Concerns

- The returns of Ethiopian nationals from Saudi Arabia to Addis Ababa increased by a slight 7% between April (4,159) and May (4,434). While no returns took place in May 2020 due to COVID-19-related flight suspensions, return figures from May 2021 represent a 63% decrease from the 11,886 returns recorded in May 2019.
- Tigrayan returnees continue to arrive in significant numbers from Saudi Arabia, roughly 40% of all arrivals. Many areas of the Tigray Regional State remain inaccessible due to ongoing hostilities, and other areas are suffering from disruptions of basic services and food insecurity. Many returnees who are unable to return to Tigray might need temporary accommodation and services in Addis Ababa.

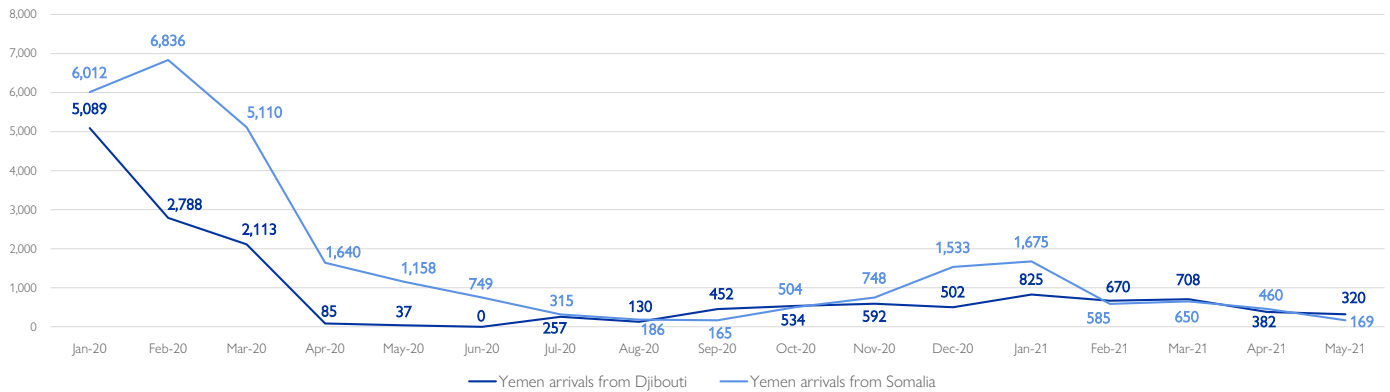
Returns of Ethiopian Nationals from Saudi Arabia Electronically Registered by IOM



## Migrant Flows Observed in Yemen

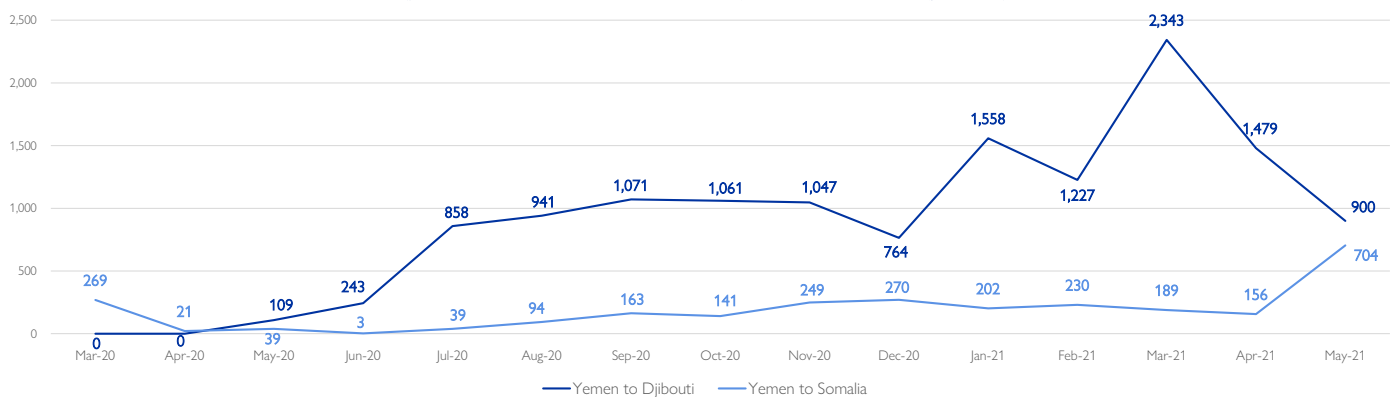
- Overall, 489 migrant arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa were recorded in May 2021; a 42% increase from April and a significant 103% decrease compared to May 2020. Contrary to previous months the majority travelled from Djibouti (65%), with the remaining travelling from Somalia (35%); the arrivals from Somalia decreased by 63% while the arrivals from Djibouti decreased by 16%.
- Most migrant arrivals were Ethiopian nationals (88%), with the remainder being Somali nationals (12%).
- The majority of the migrants were adult males (77%), while 19% were adult females, and 4% were children (down from 11% in April). No UMCs were tracked during this month.

*Migrant Arrivals to Yemen from the Horn of Africa (January 2020 - May 2021)*



- Due to difficulties faced by migrants upon arrival in Yemen with their inability to move onwards towards Saudi Arabia, as well as the protection environment and living conditions in Yemen, many of them often opt to return back to the Horn of Africa. Since March 2020, a total of 16,370 migrants have made this perilous return journey back to Djibouti (13,601) and to Somalia (2,769), using the same network of smugglers utilized on the journey towards the Arabian Peninsula.
- DTM Yemen could not track any returning migrants from Saudi Arabia in May 2021 due to the inaccessibility to the FMP at the Saudi Arabia-Yemen border.

*Spontaneous Returns from Yemen (March 2020 - May 2021)*



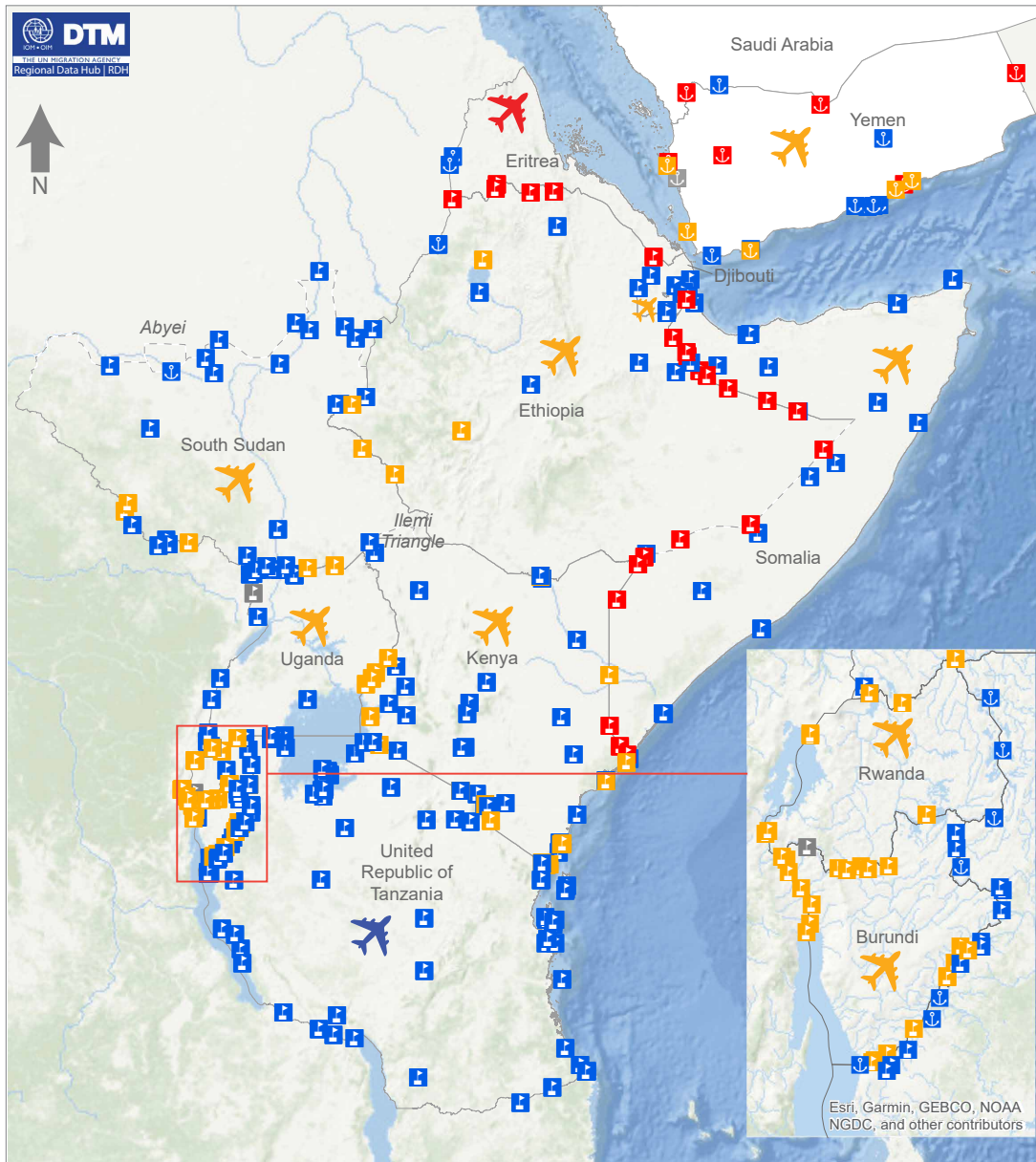
## Migrant Protection and Assistance

- IOM estimates that approximately 32,000 migrants continue to be stranded in Yemen.
- The number of migrants in detention cannot be confirmed given that access to detention facilities has not been possible, especially in northern Yemen. Since the fire incident at the Immigration, Passport and Naturalization Authority (IPNA) holding facility in Sana'a on 7 March 2021, IOM has not provided humanitarian assistance within the facility. To that end, the verification of potential detentions or forced returns has been difficult.
- Migrants' living conditions across the country continue deteriorating due to a reduction in support from the local community since the beginning of the pandemic and widespread discrimination that prevents them from accessing essential services such as health care.
- Thousands of stranded migrants have approached IOM's Aden MRC asking for return assistance to Ethiopia through VHR. These VHR flights resumed in March after months of disruption, and a total of 29 migrants were returned to Ethiopia on 6 May 2021. These operations have restarted but challenges remain due to delays in the process of verification of nationality.

## ANNEX 1 | 2021 MRC REGISTRATION DATA

MRCs	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	MRC Total
Bossaso	181	111	321	251	308	1,172
Dire Dawa	0	0	0	0	6	6
Hargeisa	225	97	56	57	73	508
Metema	0	0	72	80	15	167
Moyale	-	-	187	230	44	461
Obock	173	131	171	70	182	727
Semera	0	0	71	33	34	138
Togochale	31	126	14	61	49	281
<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>3,460</b>

## ANNEX 2 | STATUS OF POINTS OF ENTRY IN THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA REGION AND YEMEN



### Status of international flights\*

- Not Restrictive
- Partially Restrictive
- Totally Restrictive
- Not available
- Disputed Areas
- Countries East and Horn of Africa

### Status of other border points

- Sea Border Point
- Land Border Point
- Closed for entry and exit
- Partial closure
- Open for entry and exit
- Unknown

\*Details of the travel restriction can be found on IATA website: <https://www.iata.org/>

SOURCE:  
International Air Transport Association (IATA)  
Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

DATE: 31 May 2021

DISCLAIMER: These maps are for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.